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SUBJECT: SOUTH INDIA PLANS TO BOOST SECURITY FORCES IN WAKE OF
MUMBAI ATTACKS

REFS: A) CHENNAI 251, B) CHENNAI 254

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The attacks in Mumbai have concentrated minds in South India. Karnataka state officials in Bangalore are apparently close to finalizing plans to create two new security forces. One will be a 700-member S.W.A.T.-style commando squad; the other will be a 4500-member unit designed to provide armed security to important facilities in the private sector. The commando squad appears to be a relatively new idea, but state officials have been discussing an armed security squad for the private sector for at least 18 months. Both units should help fill gaping holes in the state's capabilities, and may provide opportunities for cooperation with U.S. entities.

Target: Bangalore?

¶2. (SBU) In the wake of the Mumbai attacks, Karnataka officials see their state, and particularly its capital, Bangalore, as a prime target for future terror attacks. The city has suffered terror attacks before, including a series of bombings in July (reftels) and a shooting/grenade attack at the Indian Institute of Science in ¶2006. As the birthplace of India's high-technology boom, Bangalore also hosts campuses, offices, and buildings belonging to many of the world's leading high-tech companies, including Microsoft, GE, Texas Instruments, IBM, Wipro, Infosys, and Dell, to name only a few. Local officials and business leaders have long feared that "brand Bangalore" may be a tempting target for terrorists.

Black Cats in Bangalore

¶3. (SBU) The state's Home Secretary (who is in charge of law-and-order issues), showed us on December 3 a draft plan to create a state S.W.A.T.-style police force of approximately 700 modeled on the Indian Government's National Security Guards (NSG, colloquially referred to as the "Black Cats"). The NSG, based in New Delhi, played the key role in engaging the terrorists in Mumbai and bringing that attack to an end. He said that the plan had been "fast-tracked" and should get the necessary approval within days. (He told us on December 4 that the cabinet had already approved the plan.)

Protecting the private sector

¶4. (SBU) The Home Secretary also told us that the state was in the final stages of approving a 4500-strong force modeled on the central government's Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which guards India's key bits of infrastructure, including ports, airports, and civilian nuclear facilities. The role of this force would be to provide armed guards for key private sector facilities, including Bangalore's info-tech campuses. At present, India's gun-control laws make it difficult for private sector firms to have armed security. This new force, likely financed through a combination of public and private funding, aims to fill this gap. He said that the

force could get approval "within two weeks."

Tamil Nadu goes shopping for its commandos

¶5. (SBU) Local press reported that Tamil Nadu's police commando unit (282 men and 10 women) have submitted a proposal to procure new equipment, including night-vision gear, helmets, two-inch mortars, sniper rifles, and other improved weaponry. The state has its own commando training school, established in 1992, but its graduates have seen little action, apart from a 1996 encounter with a gangster, according to the report.

Comment:

¶6. (SBU) There is no doubt that South India's policy makers paid close attention to the Mumbai attacks and are keen to prevent a repeat. Usually, attacks in India have resulted in local authorities stepping up security temporarily, and then going "back to normal" after a few days or weeks. We have delivered messages in recent days to top officials in our consular district urging them to make permanent, robust improvements to security in facilities like hotels. It is too soon to tell whether these states will heed this advice, but Karnataka's efforts to create new security infrastructure appear to be a step in the right direction. Their creation may even open new opportunities for collaboration with U.S. law enforcement entities, particularly in the wake of the GOI's willingness to cooperate with the FBI in Mumbai. Perhaps even more important than creating these forces, however, will be whether they are trained and deployed effectively. We will be watching closely.

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